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LETTER DATED 15 JANUARY 1999 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF UKRAINE TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The Government of Ukraine shares the concern, repeatedly expressed by the Security Council, over the escalating fighting in Sierra Leone. Furthermore, Ukraine supports the Security Council in its strong condemnation of all those who have given assistance, including through the supply of arms and mercenaries, to the rebels in Sierra Leone. In this context, the authorities of Ukraine have been seriously alarmed at the dissemination of information about the alleged identification of some mercenaries in Sierra Leone as nationals of Ukraine.

Since an explicit reference to the above allegations was made in the letter dated 6 January 1999 from the President of Liberia addressed to the President of the Security Council, which was subsequently distributed as a document of the Security Council (S/1999/17), upon instructions from the Government of Ukraine I would like to state the following.

In 1990, Ukraine signed the International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries. It should be noted that the delegation of my country took the most active participation in the drafting of the above document within the relevant bodies of the United Nations. Since 1993, Ukraine has been a member of the group of nations which have ratified the Convention. Pending its entry into force, Ukraine has assumed and faithfully respected its obligation to refrain from any act which would defeat the object and purpose of the Convention.

Notwithstanding the fact that this international treaty has not yet entered into force, Ukraine has already taken a number of practical measures to prevent the recruitment, use, financing or training of mercenaries. In particular, in accordance with the criminal code of Ukraine, the recruitment, financing, material support or training of mercenaries as well as the participation without authorization of relevant government bodies in armed conflicts for the purpose of obtaining material compensation or other private gain are considered as criminal offences punishable by imprisonment for up to 12 years.

Regarding the information about the alleged identification of some mercenaries in Sierra Leone as nationals of Ukraine, thus far the competent

authorities of Ukraine have not received any evidence to this effect. Nor has it been confirmed in the recent special report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Observer Mission in Sierra Leone (S/1999/20).

In this regard, the Ukrainian side would be grateful to any Government furnishing any proof related to participation of nationals of Ukraine in the conflict in Sierra Leone. Until these proofs are presented, the Ukrainian authorities are compelled to refute any such allegations as groundless, and urge States Members to refrain from dissemination of any unconfirmed information related to this matter in future.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Volodymyr YEL'CHENKO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative of
Ukraine to the United Nations